2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

It having proved impossible to get this translation published before the author's death, the manuscript was left in the care of Professor O. Solberg, who had repeatedly rendered invaluable assistance in bringing out other important works of his and who has since then published his SANTAL RIDDLES and his WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE SANTALS, Oslo 1940. At his request I have undertaken to act as editor of the translation, and I am happy to be able to do this last service to a deceased friend.

I have considered it to be my duty to check the translation with the original Santal text wherever I was in doubt, but I have only occasionally found it necessary to make some slight and insignificant verbal changes. On the whole I have faithfully reproduced the readings of the manuscript.

I have felt more free with regard to the numerous and sometimes rather long notes which had been added and which were sometimes apt to divert the reader's attention from the text itself. Since the translation was drafted some important works of our author have been published, and his SANTAL DICTIONARY, Oslo 1932—1936, is in reality a comprehensive encyclopaedia of Santal lore. A reference to its statements usually gives full information about such details which would else have to be explained in lengthy notes. I have therefore to a considerable extent substituted such references for the notes of the manuscript.

The text here laid before the ethnologist is a genuine account of Santal traditions and institutions, taken down from the mouth of Kolean, an old Santal, who had learnt it from his own teacher. We cannot say how far back these traditional tales can be carried, from generation to generation. But as we have them before us, they are evidently the result of a comparatively long development.

We know nothing about the different phases of this development. It is evident that there are borrowings from Aryan sources, but it is also clear that a considerable portion is genuine Santal lore, and it is often difficult to distinguish between both elements. Thus the name Thakur of the vague supreme god seems to be Aryan; and such is certainly the case with his additional designation Jiu 'soul, spirit'. But that need not imply that the whole conception is Aryan. Several customs and institutions described in the text have admittedly been taken over from the Hindus, but also here there are numerous doubtful points, which only future research can clear up.

174 The account of the wanderings of the Santals does not make it possible for us to trace their way to their present home with anything like certainty, because it is usually impossible to identify the names of locality. It is true that the wanderings of the tribe in modern times seem to have been directed towards the east, and we seem to know that kindred tribes were formerly settled much farther to the west than at the present day. But we cannot say whether there may be traces of old migrations in the opposite direction below the traditional tales.

128 Kolean's narrative was noted down in the year 1871, and several changes have taken place since that time. Nobody would have been better qualified to draw attention to such innovations than our translator, and some remarks will be found in the Dictionary articles quoted in the notes. To try to bring the whole account up to date would, however, mean to interfere with its genuineness, and it would represent an enlargement in one direction only, towards our own days, while the antecedent stages of the development would remain in the dark. We do more justice to the traditional account, if we leave it as it was originally noted down.

The additions to Kolean's narrative have been taken from other, younger sources, and have not the same interest. They have been left as the translator had drafted them.

Sten Konow.

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CHAPTER I

SANTAL GENESIS AND MIGRATION

(ACCORDING TO TRADITION)

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The Santals form a niche in the great museum of races in India and being one of the Pre-Dravidian tribes of the Central Belt of India, an enquiry into their origin and subsequent developments, is one of the most fascinating though difficult tasks facing the student of social history. When one remembers the fact that even the history of political India is being written and rewritten in the light of new research, one can perhaps readily excuse the investigator into the pre-historic races of India, who, proceeding on insufficient and hazy data has to frame theories on the basis of myths and folk-lore and very often lands himself in mudbanks and fog.

Out of this dimness and obscurity certain facts help us with their light, as we proceed to trace the earliest history of the Santals. There is no manner [197] of doubt that the tribe belongs to the generic Muṇḍà family. The Santal traditions support this and the Muṇḍà myths corroborate the assumption. So an enquiry into the origin of the Santals is inextricably blended with the rise and migration of the Muṇḍà family till (according to their traditions) they split up into separate tribes.

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174 121 In course of the following pages we intend to give the readers an idea of these dark races of the pre-historic times in the hope that it will prove interesting.

174 *Theories of Pre-Dravidian Immigration*

Now, various conflicting theories contront us as to the earliest history of the Pre-Dravidian Mundà family. The first hypothesis deserving mention asserts that they emigrated from the now submerged hypothetical continent of Lemuria which is supposed to have connected India with Madagascar and Africa. This receives weight from the fact that European philologists have discovered distinct language affinities all over a wide belt of territory including India, Further India, Cochin China, Malay and Nicober Islands, the Philippine Islands, Malacca and Australia. The vocabulary and language-forms associate the languages spoken there with Mundari, Santali, Bhumij, Ho, Birhor, Koda, Turi, Asuri, Korwa, Kurku, Kharia, Juang, Savara, and Gadaba.[1] All these unmistakably point to a racial contact in the past, and lead Dr. Grierson to suppose that all these countries were inhabited by an old race since extinct, whose language now sur-

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1. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, *The Mundàs and their Country*, pp. 18-19.

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vives as the common substratum of Mundà forms of speech.[1]

A second theory, advocated by Sir W. Hunter and Mr. A. K. Keane, is to the effect that the Mundà family seems to have entered India by the north-eastern passes. Next, they met the influx of the Dravidians by the north-western passes and crossed each other. This is based on the hypothesis of Col. Dalton who believed that the forefathers of the Santals came from north-east India, and found their way to the Chotanagpur plateau by following

1. "The language of the Mundàs with their kindred dialects spoken by the Santals, Hos and the other allied tribes inhabiting the Chotanagpur plateau, has been shown by Peter Schmidt to form a sub-family of the family called by him Austro-Asiatic, which includes Mon Khmer, Wa, Nicoborese, Khasi and the aboriginal languages of Mallacca. There is another family which he calls Austronesian including Indonesian, Melanesian, and Polynesian. These two families are grouped into one great family which he calls the Austric." (Sir Edward Gait, Introduction to *The Mundàs and their Country*, page iv). The following extract also deserves notice, "Geologists tell us that the Indian Peninsula was formerly cut off from the north of Asia by sea, while a land connexion existed on the one side with Madagascar and on the other with Malay Archipelago ; and although there is nothing to show that India was then inhabited, we know that it was so in Palaelithic times, when communications were probably still easier with the countries to the south-east and south-west than with those beyond the Himalayas." (Ref. Sir Edward Gait's Introduction to *The Mundàs and their Country*, pp. ix-x).

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• 174 the line of the sacred river, Damodar. (*Ref. Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, 1910, p. 90).

The third hypothesis[1] goes to suggest that the Mundà tribes originated from an admixture between the colonists from Eastern Tibet or Western China across the Himalayas with the Australoids to the south of the Himalayas.

The fourth theory, advocated by Sir Herbert Risley, proclaims the Mundà-tribes to be the earliest inhabitants of whom we have any knowledge, lending weight to the assertion of the Mundàs and their congeners that they are genuine autocthones of the Indian soil.

Last but not the least, there is the fifth theory propounded by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, as president of the Anthropological section of the *Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan*, Gauhati session (1938). He opined that the Pre-Dravidians or Proto-Australoids, probably a lower branch of the Caucasian races inhabited the south-western foot of the Himalayas, which however was not their birth place. Thereafter, they passed by the Jumna and the Ganges, moved on towards the Central Provinces, Bengal and Assam, and spread even to Burma and Cambodia.

[113] 1 See "On some traces of Kol-Mon-Anam, the Eastern Naga Hills" by S. E. Peal, Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, Bengal, Vol. LXV, page 20.

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In saying so he relies on the linguistic affinities between the Mundà-languages and those of the Mon-Khmers of Burma and Khasis of Assam.

Now let us examine the objections against these various contending claims. Risley, in his *People of India*,[1] commenting on the first theory says, "Their low stature, black skin, long heads, broad noses and relatively long forearm" confirmed for a time Huxley's hypothesis that they are related to the aborigines of Australia. Linguistic affinities plus Sclater's hypothesis of a submerged continent of Lemuria have been cited in support. But Sir William Turner's comparative study of Australian, and what he calls, Dravidian crania, has thrown much doubt on the view. Similarly, "the facts which cast doubt on the Australian affinities of the Dravidians, refute the hasty opinion which seeks to associate them with the tiny, broad-headed, and wooly-haired Negritos of the Andamans and the Philippines."

Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, in his "*The Mundàs and their Country*", does not subscribe to the theory that a widely diffused race which was capable of imposing its culture and language on a number of other people, could at all be blotted out from the face of the earth.

1. Ref. *People of India*, S. H. Risley, page 46.

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114 The theory of a north-eastern entry of the Muṇḍà tribes speaking Muṇḍàri and other dialects and of the Dravidians of Tamil-speaking family by the north-western passes, and their subsequent admixture, is also assailed by Risley. He criticises the basis of the theory as "obscure" and says that its account of the Dravidians seems to rest upon a supposed affinity between the Brahui dialect of Beluchisthan and the languages of Southern India; while the hypothesis of the north-eastern origin of the Muṇḍà-tribes depends on the fancied recognition of Mongolian characteristics among the people of Chotanagpur. Risley bases his objections on the ground that the distinction between Muṇḍà-tribes and Dravidians is purely linguistic and does not correspond to any difference of physical type. Secondly, taking into consideration the extreme improbability that a large body of very black and extremely long-headed types should have come from one region of the earth which is peopled exclusively by people of broad heads and yellow complexion, he dismisses the theory of a trans-Himalayan origin of the Dravidians. Lastly, considering the geographical distribution, the marked uniformity of physical characters among the more primitive members of the group, their animistic religion, their distinctive languages, their stone monuments and their retention of a primitive system of totemism, he concludes that the

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Mundà-tribes are the earliest inhabitants of India of whom we have any knowledge.

The foregoing is a peep into the earliest chapters of Indian history to find materials to construct a rational hypothesis as regards the possible origins of the Mundà-tribes. References from Sanskrit texts could be given, but we can perhaps state without fear of contradiction that no scientific data have as yet been unearthed by the investigators as may enable them to frame a scientifically tenable theory. One can easily form vague surmises on the basis of still more vague materials furnished by the early Aryan myths and Puranic traditions; but they leave the serious student of social history wondering if he is not really undergoing the labours of Sisyphus. So it is that historians take shelter under mystifying metaphors when they draw the "veil of obscurity" over the earliest epochs of Indian history. Others, the more assiduous, traverse all the quagmire and build from time to time, interesting theories to be pulled down again by later investigators like a house of cards. But still the search goes on.

We make no apology, therefore, to present before the reader at this stage an idea of the Santal theory of Creation and their migration from their original seat, for what it is worth.

We need hardly add that these are oral traditions, as the Santals have no written script of their

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539 "O, O, on the waters : O, O, these beings;
O, O, they are born.
Oh! for these beings! O, where shall we keep them? O, where?" (Then someone answered:—)
"O, go and tell Bara Ṭhàkur. O, they are born, these beings!
Where will you keep them? Yea, where will you keep them?"

On the birds flew to Ṭhàkur Jiu. "How shall we maintain these creatures?" they pleaded.

Ṭhàkur gave them cotton. "Whatever you eat, squeeze the juice and feed them with the cotton," he replied.

Thus the children grew up, but as they became older and older, the worries of the parents increased. Where were they going to house them, was their only thought. Again they approached Ṭhàkur Jiu and informed him of their fresh problems.

"Fly away and find a place for them," advised he.

So on they flew, and on and on, till they reached a place called Hihiri Pipiri.[1] They came

1. Hihiri Pipiri = "Their earliest abode was Hihiri or Ahiri Piri, a name which Skrefsrud derived from *hir* origin, and which others identify with pargana Ahuri in Hazaribagh." Risley, *People of India*, App. VII. Skrefsrud considers Hihiri Pipiri to be a reduplication of Hiri Piri, which again is a jingle of Hiri, like "hako-pako."

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Man has some ingenious reflections on the antiquities of the tribe when he hazards the opinion that Greek elements were infused into the Santals while at Rajmahal after Alexander's conquests in India.[1] His book proves a very interesting reading when we find him quoting the opinion of a gentleman who suggested a resemblance between Santal and Jewish myths and rituals. A second person told Man that the Santals reminded him of the Romans, while a third, that he thought that the tribe had borrowed some ideas from the Egyptians. "All were," says Man, "prepared to agree as to their similarity with the ancients, but each made a different comparison." Faced with this jigsaw puzzle and taking into account the Biblical similarities in the story of Ṭhàkur Jiu's punishment of the tribe by sending fire and rain while at Khòj kaman, he takes the myth to be a "garbled account of the flood," and concludes that either the traditions of all these ancients were derived from the same source or the Santals were connected with the above-named tribes at some period of their existence.

The next account deserving mention is given by Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud.[2] The version is remarkably

1. Ref. *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, E. G. Man pp. 59-63.

2. Ref. *Grammar of the Santali language*, Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud, Published from Benares 1873.

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similar to the tradition as narrated by us, and takes the reader through the Santal sojourn at Hihiṛi Pipiṛi, Sasaṅ beda, Khòj kaman, Hara or Harata and Jàrpi. But what is most important in the version is that the author has sought to identify, with query marks of course, the mythical seats with modern geographical names. Thus he seems to think that Aere may be Iran, Kaeṇḍe may be Kandahar, Cae might refer to the Chinic Tartary and the fabled Campa of Santal myth, the land of seven rivers with Sapta Sind, the present Punjab, where the early Santals dwelt for long, and where their institutions took rise, and lastly Sikhàr to be the modern Hazaribagh district. The other point to note is that this account mentions some rivers among which are the Maha nàni, Sinjo nàni, Giru nàni, the Sura nàni and the Gua nàni by whose side the immigrants successively lived.

We should mention here that the foregoing traditional story tallied in essential particulars with that told by the Santals of Mayurbhanj during our investigations there and we have noted the minor differences in the foot-notes.

It is, however, very interesting to note the major variations with the traditions as noted by "Hoṛkoṛèn Mare Hapṛamko Reak' Katha" from that obtaining in Mayurbhanj. In the first place, all the members of a conference of the old Santals insisted on

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derived their names. About them, the Mayurbhanj Santals added that Kisku did not bring anything, while returning from hunt. He was the eldest, so he was known as Kisku and was their tribal chief, whlie Sòrèn became his orderly. Gòndwar did not go to the hunt at all, so he was considered as the worst of all the clans.

Risley does not think that the story of the wandering of the Santals deserves serious consideration "neither as a record of actual wandering, nor as an example of the working of the myth-making faculty."[1] Considering how from the same data Mr. Skrefsrud tried to prove that the Santals came from the North-west and Col. Dalton from Assam, he concludes that both the hypotheses are untenable. Continuing he says,[2] "If, however, the legends of the Santals are regarded as accounts of recent migrations, their general purport will be found to be fairly in accord with actual facts. Without pressing the conjecture mentioned above, that Ahiri pipri may be no other than pargana Ahuri in the north-west of Hazaribagh district, it is clear that a large and important Santal colony was once settled in the parganas Chai and Champa in the same district. A tradition is noticed by Col. Dalton of an old fort in Chai occupied by

1. Risley, *People of India*, App. vii, p. clix.
2. Risley, *People of India*, App. viii, p. clix.

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114 one Jaura, a Santal Raja, who destroyed himself and
173 his family on hearing the approach of a Muhamma-
194 dan army under Sayid Ibrahim Ali alias Malik Baya,
212 a general of Muhammad Tughlak's who died in 1353. This tradition, so far as it refers to the existence of a Santal fort in Chai Champa, is to some extent corroborated by the following passage from the legends of the southern Santals collected by the Rev. J. Phillips and published in Appendix G to Annals of Rural Bengal ed 1868: "Dwelling there (in Chai Champa) they greatly multiplied. There were two gates, the Ahin gate and the Bahini gate, to the fort of Chai Champa." If, moreover, the date of the taking of this fort by Ibrahim Ali were assumed to be about 1340 A.D., the subsequent migrations of which the tribal legends speak would fill up the time intervening between the departure of the Santals from Chai Champa and their settlement in the present Santal
174 Parganas. Speaking generally, these recent migra-
173 tions have been to the east, which is the direction
114 they might *prima facie* have been expected to follow. The earlier settlements which the Santal traditions speak of, those in Ahiri Pipri and Chai Champa, lie on the north-western frontier of the table-land of Hazaribagh and in the direct line of advance of the numerous Hindu immigrants from Bihar. That the influx of the Hindus has in fact driven the Santals east-ward is beyond doubt, and the line which they

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are known to have followed in their retreat corresponds on the whole with that attributed to them in their tribal legends."

Rev. P. O. Bodding[1] however is inclined to give due weight to the traditional origin of the Santals. Summing up the whole position he opines that the Cae and Campa of Santal myths are to be found in Hazaribagh and on the Chotanagpur plateau, where they lived about 600 years ago, and gives it as his conclusion that a study of Santal traditions and their language makes it likely that they reached this place from the west (south-west); and it is not improbable that about two thousand years ago they were on both sides of the Ganges west of Benares.

We would conclude this chapter with a reference to the myths of the other Muṇḍà tribes to see if any side-light may be obtained on the early history of the Santals. Now, speaking generally, there is a good deal of resemblance between the traditions of the Muṇḍàs, the Santals and the Khaṛias, which makes the conclusion irresistible that they belong to the same stock. We have seen that the Santals say that upto the period the people were at Campa,[2] the

1. *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Santal Parganas, Vol. XXII, pp. 92-95.

2. Campa = According to S. C. Roy, (p. 100. footnote) Campa was also the old name of Bhagalpur and its political boundary "may be stated as extending from

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Similarly, Khàiri gar of Santal tradition may perhaps be identified with Kheri-garh or the fort on the hill at Kheri, ten miles to the south-west of Bhagalpur.[1]

Secondly, the Mundà traditions corroborate the story of a struggle with the Kharwars, in tune with the Santal myth on the point. The reason for the attack was the refusal by the Mundàs (or by the Santals according to Santal tradition) to bestow the hand of one of their girls on the son of Madho Singh Kharwar. The tradition of the Kharwars also affords corroboration to this tradition of the Mundàs and Santals.[2] According to Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, this fight took place while the Mundàs and Santals were at Rothasgarh. "without doubt the Ruidasgarh of Mundà tradition." Next, he suggests, one branch of the Mundà tribes such as the Korwas, the Asurs, the Birijas, and the Kisanrs, appear to have followed the course of the Koel river till they teached the present districts of Palamau and Ranchi, while the Mundàs and the Santals crossed the Sone and marched on in a south-easterly direction along the border-land that separates the present Hazaribagh district from Palamau and Ranchi (Nagpur of Santal and Mundà tradition).

1. Ref. *The Mundàs and their country*, Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, p. 100.
2. Ref. Do Do p. 110

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735 293 154 sorrows. It is a pathetic sight to see young Santals keep sober till they marry, and then grow old suddenly as cares and anxieties of life come to them, when they plunge headlong in a sodden life.

181 The rigours of their life on the earth are somewhat overcome by the objects of material culture we have noted in the foregoing pages. But one can easily see that they are crude devices of a primitive world, not serving their purpose well in the [171] twentieth century. But, one must however notice that the level of culture presented by the Santal is on a par with that of the rest of the hill tribes of what may be called the Central Belt of India, which is a homogeneous culture-area in all important respects.

Conclusion

174 181 224 241 433 As we conclude the review of Santal economic life, we find that the actual stage reached by the tribe in its material culture is still primitive. Their traditions make it clear that there was a time in the life of the Santals when they lived a semi-hunting nomadic life, perpetually moving in quest of food. But the picture we have got in the foregoing pages reveals a people who have finally accepted the life of settled agriculturists.

177 As, however, we look closely to the objects of Santal material culture, we notice similarities with

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614 that one has been lost. Regarding the *Bedeas*, it is
• 174 important to note the fact that there exists in
101 Mayurbhanj, a tribe of aboriginals bearing the same name. And naturally it struck us if the extinct clan of the original Santals developed into a separate tribe in course of time. Our enquiries revealed however that the *Bedias* of Mayurbhanj do not identify themselves as Santals in origin, nor do the Santals consider them to be of their tribe. The
101 following extract from the *Census Report of Mayur-*
162 *bhanj*, Vol. I, page 157 may usefully be quoted here:—

"According to the present census, the total strength of the Bedias, who call themselves *Chot Kurmi* or *San Kurmi*, is 578, with 292 males and 286 females. They are all returned from the Bamanghati subdivision. Though they claim to be allied in one way or another to the *Kurmis*, the latter relegate them to the position of that class of gypsies, acrobats and snake-catchers, who under a similar name but with a different spelling (*Bediya*) are found in Bihar. This small tribe is known in the state for their filthy habits and criminal propensities."

101 In this connexion, it is however important to
174 remember that the *Kurmis* (or Kurmbis) with whom the *Bedias* of Mayurbhanj ally themselves, belonged to the parent stock of the Santals in course of their

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legendary migrations as we have already seen in the first chapter; and it was only at Campa that the *Kurmbis* adopted Hindu customs and manners. Therefore, there is a strong presumption that *Bedeas* who call themselves *Chot Kurmi*, might have once belonged to the Santal fold.

Coming to Man's list of Santal tribes, we find that he sticks to the traditional number twelve; but makes up the deficiency by referring to *Besras* and *Murmus* twice, under different spellings. Thus *Besras* pass also as *Bisras* and *Murmu* comes again as *Marmoring*. This mistake perhaps occurred in this way. Presumably Man asked a Santal about his clan and the man replied, "Murmu iñ." (*I am a Murmu.*) And from this he noted down the name of the tribe as "*Marmoring*".

There is general agreement about the names of clans (although with different spellings) except about *Bedeas*, *Kharwars* and *Gondwars*. An attempt should be made here to clear the prevailing confusion amongst ethnographers.

Kharwars

We find from Man and Col. Dalton's lists that they mention *Kedoar* and *Karwar* respectively as Santal clans. Presumably they are the same, under different spellings, of what is known as *Kharwars*. We have seen in our story of Santal Genesis and

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Migration that the original people called themselves *Kharwars*. Even today this tradition passes current amongst the Santals of Mayurbhanj, who say that their alternative name is "Kherwal" (with hard 'l'), although their common appellation is *Santal*. It is gathered that the Santals of Dhalbhum also call themselves *Kherwal* (with soft 'l'). The educated amongst the Santals believe that the word *Kherwal* is derived from the name of some ancient place somewhere in Bengal, where the pure Santals lived. For this they rely on the fact that they have some old songs which relate to "Gang nàni" which they identify with the Ganges. Therefore they believe that the place from which the name *Kherwal* was derived was somewhere in Bengal. There are, however, no *Kharwars* in Mayurbhanj as distinct from *Kherwals*[1].

Mr. Ragunath Mañjhi, a Santal teacher of Bamanghati, Mayurbhanj, was, however, inclined to the belief that the name came from *Kshatriyas*, meaning "those who fight". He also referred to a story current that the original Santals had a leader whose name was *Kharwar* and it is from him that they derived their name. Such popular beliefs were shared by many, as we found in course of our investigations.

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1. With acknowledgments to M. Laeequaddin, Esq. Census Officer, Mayurbhanj.

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All these however lead us nowhere. And all that we can guess in the absence of more reliable evidence is that there is no independent clan amongst the Santals bearing the name of *Kharwars* or *Kherwals*, and that perhaps some Santals when questioned by Man and Col. Dalton gave their clan as *Karwar* or *Kedoar* as the alternative of *Kharwars*, the traditional name for Santals, before they came to Saont or Sant in Midnapore.

It should be mentioned here that Risley in his *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, gives the following equivalent of the general name Santal viz. *Saontar*, *Kharwar*, or *Safa-Hòr* and mentions *Kharwars* or *Safa-Hor* as 'sub-tribes' as well, but not as a sept (clan) name. We should add that the very name *Safa-Hòr* is not now much understood by the Mayurbhanj Santals. But we have very reliable evidence[1] to say that there was, in 1871, a movement in the Santal Parganas known as the *Kharwar movement* when some Santals declared themselves as *Safa-Hòr* (the pure men), after eschewing fowls, pigs and intoxicating liquor, but taking "gañja," (hemp, Canabinis Sativa) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindu practices. It led at a time to some local ferment and had also a political aspect. But beyond

1. Ref. *Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, 1910, p. 145.

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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175 668 614 this we do not know anything and no light is available to assert that *Kharwar* was ever a clan name.

• 174 101 668 It should, however, be noted here that the Mayurbhanj Census Report, 1931, (Vol. I, p. 215) opines that "the present Santals are the descendants of the section of the tribe who became followers of Bhagirath (the leader of the Kharwar movement)—a Santal who endeavoured to start a movement to turn out the Sahibs and Zemindars out of the country and who was tried for sedition in 1871 and imprisoned at Bhagalpur where he died."

Gòndwars

114 614 The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned invariably answered that they were twelve clans, but they made no mention of the *Bedea* (supposed to be lost) and made up for the deficiency by mentioning *Gòndwars*. This was remarkable as in no other account do we come across such a name. In course of searching enquiries also we could not meet any *Gòndwar*. [The Mayurbhanj Census Report (1931, Vol. I, p. 192) also mentions the clan.]

614 563 829 The general belief among the Santals is that *Gòndwars* occupy a low position among them as they are supposed to be a cross between *Gònd-Munḍà* and *Santals*. There is in existence in Mayurbhanj a class of "Hansdak's" called "Gòndwar-Hansdak's" and they are considered distinctly low in the esti-

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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mation of the Santals, as distinct from other sub-clans as "Kuda-Hansdak," "Bale Hansdak" who are considered pure. It is said that the *Gòndwars*, in their attempt to conceal their real identity declare themselves as belonging to the *Sòrèn* clan, whereas, in their manner of worship they differ from the Sòrèns radically, thereby giving a clue to their identity.

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The derivation of the very word *Gòndwar* points to their connexion with the Gònds. The ending "war" probably means "relating to." In saying so, we rely on the fact that one of the sub-clans of the *Murmus* call themselves *Khedwar-Murmu*. According to them they derived the name from the circumstance that their progenitors chased and hunted a "Murum" (*Nil gae* ; *Portax Pictus*). *Khedwar* here means those related to a chase (*khed* = chase, *war* = relating to).[1]

Clan Exogamy and Totemism

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At this stage we should note that all these clans are exogamous ; and presumably to preserve the blood from being contaminated by unconscious incest, they have certain pass-words to distinguish

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1. Regarding Bedeas, Kharwars and Gòndwars, we must acknowledge the help received from Moulavi M. Laeequddin, Census Officer, Mayurbhanj.

[115]

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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leaves, she was found to have put in a piece of cloth instead of vegetables or meat inside. Hence, at present they are prohibited from cooking such delicacies.

(v) Salpat Hao Ṭuḍu:—The expression means a species of large red ants inside nests of *sal-leaves*. It is said that in legendary times, the ancestors of this sub-clan killed these ants by pressing them between the leaves.

(vi) Rok' Ṭuḍu' (*Rok'*, to pierce, to perforate):—According to customary practices they are required to seek the help of the uncle to bore the ears of the child during such ceremonies. The child, moreover, should be placed on a stack of paddy.

(vii) Kaḍa Ṭuḍu (*Kaḍa*, buffalo).

(viii) Hàṇḍi Ṭuḍu.

(ix) Saṅge Ṭuḍu.

(x) Aṅgaria Ṭuḍu.

Sir H. Risley, in his *People of India* relates some interesting stories about the formation of the five additional clans and considering there are variations and supplementary information, we think it worthwhile to acquaint the reader with the tradition as noted by him. According to his version, the tribe "Baske" at first belonged to the Ṭuḍus. But as

1. This is possibly a short form of Rok' lutur Ṭuḍu.

31 Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca, 1933-1939) 1962
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they offered their break-fast (*baske*) to the gods while at Campa, they were formed into a separate clan. Besras were so named because of the "immoral behaviour of their eponym, who was called 'Besra,' the licentious one." It agrees with our version in tracing the origin of "Pàuṛia" from the pigeon and "Còṛèn" from the lizard, but adds that on the occasion of a famous tribal hunt, the forefathers of these two clans could not kill any other animal excepting pigeons and lizards, making no mention about the story current in Mayurbhanj we have noted before. Regarding Bedeas, Risley's story says that they were left behind when the Santals went out of Campa. "They had no father, so the story goes, at least the mother of their first ancestor could not say who his father was and for this reason they were deemed of lower rank than the other septs." Continuing he states that this clan is believed to have arisen during the time of Mandò Siñ in Campa when the Santals had begun to come in touch with the Hindus. According to some Santals, their father was a Rajput while their mother was a Kisku girl. Risley concludes with the conjecture that the well-known gypsy tribe of Bedeas may be the result of a liaison of a Rajput with a Santal girl, but would not stretch the theory too far as "the mere resemblance of names is a slender foundation for such a hypothesis."

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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614 Thus theoretically speaking at least, each of its group is exogamous as far as its own group is concerned, but endogamous in relation to the other groups, who are *Bòndhus*, subject to a variety of other restrictions, as we shall soon see in detail. [174] Broadly speaking, this arrangement points to the existence of a dual division among the Santals in the past for matrimonial purposes.

It may be noted here that the various Santal clans have their own *gadi* (original seats). If it so chances that a Santal finds his own *gadi*, the same with that of others, his attraction is stronger towards his clan-group than to his other relatives, however near they may be. Thus there is a solid tie among the [783] *Jàtià Peras* (friends of the same blood) belonging [764] to the same clan, all of whose members undergo ceremonial pollution on the death of one of the [571] clan. Thus clan-ties amongst Santals transcend even degrees of relationship.

[428] The son inherits the clan-name of his father [691] and lives with his father as of right. The father [611] is the natural guardian of the children, and the way in which descent is reckoned is patrilineal. The [562] Santal wife has no legal status in the eye of tribal jurisprudence; she is simply bought and belongs to the husband's family as a chattel. And the type [594] of family that centres round the father as the head, may be characterised as patripotestal.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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to be their nefarious instruments. "Don't believe 562
women," they would say equally with those who thought our original mother was built of the left crooked rib of man. It is no wonder therefore that Santal customary law should be pervaded with the spirit of considering its women as mere chattels to be 'bought' for matrimony and progeny.

Thus theoretically at least the Santals think of their women as capricious and irresponsible creatures, a useful and indispensable necessity to the personal and tribal life but belonging to a sub-human species. So we find that what to say of rights of acquiring property, she has no civic rights in the tribe recognised for her. She cannot sit as a member in the deliberations of the village elders, although her evidence is admissible in those 'courts.'

Various factors contributed to this position. [174]
But the most important seems to be the semi-hunting, perpetually migrating nature of the original Santal, who formed members of a seemingly communistic society, dividing the produce of their soil between themselves. So not being tenants in the legal sense of the term with real properties, the question of providing for children did not strike the Santal seriously, till he, in recent times, accepted the position of settled agriculturists.

Now a keen observer sees a change. Whatever [178]
their old tribal ideas might have been, the women

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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585 valent Hindu forms. Many of the ceremonials as
177 the application of vermilion to the bride's forehead, have been traced directly to Hindu influences.
585 This *sindur dan* or *sindrà dan* is a remnant of the
174 primitive custom of mixing the blood of the husband
177 and wife, which they either drank or daubed themselves with, as a symbol of an eternal union. As it is a queer problem to discover whether the egg came first or the hen was first, ethnologists have in their turn, traced Dravidian influences in the
[171] custom. Similarly, the marriage with a *mòhua*
[588] tree, the race of the husband and wife while at the ceremony, called *Kado ghata*, have their parallel in the customs of the Hindus of the Central belt.

II. LOVE MARRIAGE

(1) Raja Raji

583 The freedom of social intercourse that the
[834] Santals allow to their boys and girls, naturally leads to many love-marriages ; but the Santals, even when in love, have to go through certain formalities
583 before living as man and wife. So we see that
584 when a couple feel the urge for matrimony, they go
[622] to the house of the village Headman and inform him of their desire. The Headman now will take them to the house of the lover and there, in the presence of the village elders, the beloved is asked

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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796 614 [782] [252] then offered to the gods to protect the clan from earthly maladies, bowel-complaints being specially named as a dreaded disease. The meat, thereafter, is cooked with salt and water. The *Màrṇḍis* must eat the heads of the animals sacrificed and the rest goes to the share of the invited.

The *Baskes*, when questioned, said that they need not like *Màrṇḍis* start the festival before sunrise; any time before noon suits their clan calendar. [782] [252] Their sacrificial meat is cooked with turmeric, spices and salt, and their gods are similiar to those of the *Màrṇḍis*.

796 *Pata* (Santal *Còròk* in mid-April).

[177] We have seen from the foregoing that the Santals, in addition to their orthodox festivals, associate themselves with the various Hindu ceremonials like the *Durga Puja*, *Kali Puja* and others. [174] From the evidence at our disposal, one cannot be sure as to when they began their association, but as one looks to the *Pata*, the Santal version of Hindu *Còròk*, (Hook-swinging festival) it seems to be pretty old. In the chapter on *Bitlàbà* or Santal social ostracism, we noticed that the final trial of the offenders takes place on *Pata cando*, meaning the month of *Còròk*, and the orthodox meaning of the word *Pata* is stated to be "a festival in honour of *Mahadeo*."

. 3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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791 and is then called a "Jan-Guru". As regards
796 the second method, it is stated that there are several
[787] *Guru Boṅgas*. The man who is devoted to them and has faith on them sees them coming to him in dreams. He then knows that the *Boṅgas* are pleased
[782] with him and want his worship. If the pupil likes it, he offers vermilion and *dhup* (incense) in the names of the *Boṅgas*, he saw in his dream. The *Boṅgas* again appear before him in dreams and tell him of their powers and ask him to worship them. With the series of *Boṅgas* thus appearing before him, the pupil becomes *Koṅka* (puzzled). He then goes to the *Boṅgathans* (the places where the *Boṅgas* live) and remains there for some days. He talks with the spirits and they assure him that whenever he remembers them, they will be at his beck and call and tell him whatever he wants to know. Thus getting his boon, the pupil returns home and continues to worship the *Boṅgas* and practise his power.

Conclusion

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789 Magic and witch-craft are an essential part of
[171] the belief of most of the Hinduised tribes and the pre-Dravidian people resident in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Although it cannot be vouched for a
[177] certainty as to whether the Santals borrowed it
[174] wholesale from the Hindus, there is some internal

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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evidence showing the influence of Hindu ideas on Santal magical practices. In the race of life, the Santal finds inexplicable super-normal phenomena. He does not know how to react to the unknown and unknowable; so he has recourse to magic to deal with the impersonal forces and energies through appropriate rites and spells. This is done not by all the Santals, but only by the *Ojha*, a specialist in the art of magic and witch-craft. And he is generally the common doctor for all the Hinduised tribes and the Muṇḍà people. What the witch-doctor does is to practise the art of dissociating himself with the aim of spirit-communication, when he chants some magic formulae and makes the patent gestures while he performs the time-honoured rites to conjure the spirits. All these he does with the aid of some spirits, and although his mission is like the priest of religion to attain curative results that endure to the benefit of Santals individually or the tribe taken as a whole, it cannot be said that anti-social results do not follow due to the activities of some malignant *Ojhas* out to wreak personal vengeance on their enemies with the aid of malevolent spirits.

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[P.1]

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Santal Parganas is a district within Bhagalpur Division in Bihar, lying between 23° 40′ and 25° 18′ North latitude and between 86° 28′ and 87° 57′ East longitude. It is bounded on the north by the districts of Bhagalpur and Purnea, on the east by Malda, Murshidabad and Birbhum ; on the south by Burdwan and Manbhum ; and on the west by Hazaribagh, Monghyr and Bhagalpur. The principal range in the district is that of the Rajmahal Hills. They consist of a succession of hills, plateaus, valleys and ravines, the general elevation of which varies from 500 to 800 feet above sea level. A large portion of the range is included in the Daminikoh (the skirt of the hills). In the Santal parganas within the four subdivisions Dumka, Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal, the Santals live in largest numbers. They live in Damin areas, where previously one could not enter without the permission of the Commissioner. The Santal living on the very tract of the Aryan overflooding Northern India (in fact very near the sacred triangular spot between Benares, Rajgir and Gaya which witnessed the phenomenal Upanishadic speculation of the days of Janak and the rise of Jainism and Buddhism) could not but have been influenced by these and in their turn must have considerably left their mark on the folk culture of Northern India. If there is any culture which still carries the impress of the underlying philosophic speculation and order of thought that was wide spread in India prior to the rise of the Dravidian culture, it was very likely the belief and

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174 177 social order of the Pre-Dravidian Santals. In the Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian culture of India, the Santals rather than the Mundas or Hos of Chota Nagpur stand in the lime light. Similarly their contact with Dravidian culture which at one time was not at all confined to Southern India, is well proved from their neighbours, the Malers, who in language along with the Chota Nagpur Oraons speak a Dravidian 197 tongue. Linguistically the Santals belong to what has been called the westernmost peripheral representatives of what is the Hawaiian type family in the Pacific.

161 162 At the Census of 1931 they numbered over two and a half million. In Santal Parganas the number was 7,54,804, the rest was distributed over the other parts of Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Assam. If we study the strength of the population of the Santal during the thirty years (1901 to 1931) in the two provinces, Bihar and Bengal combined, it can be seen that they have increased from 18,69,074 to 25,08,789 which represents an increase of over 33 percent in a single generation.

174 As regards the origin of the Santals it is very difficult to say anything definite. There are no authentic written records of their own. From the traditions, customs, language and physical features of Santals one can conjecture to a certain extent about their origin. On the basis of the above items several theories have been put forward to account for their origin. Revd. 3 n 114 Skrefsurd[1] has suggested that the Santals entered India 174 from the North West and first settled in the Punjab and then made their way to their present habitat at Chota Nagpur. But Colonel Dalton and Sir William Hunter[2],

1. Introduction to Grammar of Santali Language 1873.
2. Annals of Rural Bengal.
3 n. [Erratum: this should read "Rev." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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believed that the Santals came to the present abode from North East India. 114 174

Dr. A. Campbell[1] is of the opinion that the Santals, or rather the people of whom they are a portion, occupied the country on both sides of the Ganges, but more especially that in the north. Starting from the north-east, they gradually worked their way up the valley of the Ganges till we find them in the neighbourhood of Benares, with their headquarters near Mirzapur. Here the main body, which had kept to the northern bank of the river, crossed, and, heading southwards, came to the Vindhya hills. This obstruction deflected them to the left, and they at length found themselves on the tableland of Chota Nagpur, and he further writes "Efforts have been made to identify the countries, rivers, forts, etc. mentioned in the traditions of the Santals with those of similar names in Chota Nagpur. Localities have in many instances been found bearing traditional names, and the inference has been drawn that it was here that the traditions of the Santals took their rise, and that their institutions were formed. But only a slight knowledge of these traditions is necessary to show that they belong to a much more remote period than the location of the Santals in Chota Nagpur, and to countries separated from it by many hundreds of miles."

Objecting to the above theory Sir Herbert Risley[2] writes the following "A people whose only means of recording facts consists of tying knots in strings, and who have no bards to hand down a national epic by [211] [538]

1. The Traditional Migration of the Santal Tribe, Indian Antiquity pp. 103-4. [113]
2. Tribes and Castes of Bengal Vol. II pp. 235-6.

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oral tradition, can hardly be expected to preserve the memory of their past long enough or accurately enough for their accounts of it to possess any historical value. If, however, the legends of the Santals are regarded as an account of recent migrations, their general purport will be found to be fairly in accord with actual facts". He further writes "The earliest settlements which Santal tradition speaks of, those in Ahiri Pipri and Chai Champa, lie on the north-western frontier of the tableland of Hazaribagh and in the direct line of advance of the numerous Hindu immigrants from Bihar. That the influx of Hindus has in fact driven the Santals eastward is beyond doubt, and the line which they are known to have followed in their retreat corresponds on the whole with that attributed to them in their tribal legends".

Rev. P.O. Bodding of the Scandinavian Mission in the Santal Parganas and well known for his works on the life and customs of the Santals believes that the Santals entered India from the North Eastern gate. He draws his conclusion from their customs, language and physical features. He points out that many of the customs as preserved, point to the east, even further than Assam. He also mentions from their language that the linguistic relatives of the Santals are to be found to the east, in Southern Burma and on the Malaya Peninsula. He tries to trace their origin from their somatological characters, and says that "the Dravidian type, although the prevalent one, is by no means the only one found. Several Aryan types are met with and a Mongoloid one is not very uncommon. Other types may be found, but are too few to be taken into account. All this proves mixture of blood at some

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time or other. What I would especially draw attention to in this connection is the Mongoloid type and types resembling what is found in Assam, Burma and further on".

In summing up he writes "If we are to accept the tradition of the people, these either affirm or presuppose that since the time when the human race was split up into nations they have always been wandering in a more or less easterly direction—a direction which now-a-days also is followed by them in all their migrations. This would imply that they came into India from the north-west. I must confess that I personally was long of this opinion, and I have not given it up altogether, but I am more and more getting my eyes opened to the fact that the Santal and Munda peoples have their connections towards the East".

Santal Movements in Historical Periods:—From the above it appears that we are now not certain about their original home. From the ancient records available it appears that there is no doubt that the Santal began to settle in Chota Nagpur and its neighbouring areas during historic times. The earliest mention of them is recorded in an article of Sir John Shore entitled "Some Extraordinary Facts, Customs and Practices of the Hindus"[1]. In this article Sir John designates them as "Soontars", who were residing in Ramgarh. The first mention of the Santals in the district of Santal Parganas occurs in Montogomery Martin's Eastern India[2]. There are two references. In the first

1. Asiatic researches 1795.
2. Buchanan Hamilton's manuscripts.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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and night. As a rule they cook their food outside, but always have a fire-place inside. During the cold season they generally cook their food inside, the result being that the house specially at night, is suffocatingly full of smoke and every thing becomes covered with soot. This does not, however, seem to affect the Santals much. In the bed-room they store their rice and all other belongings, and the fowls are kept too in that room at night. It is, of course, not possible to keep such a house clean, even if they tried to do so.

Agriculture :—The Santals before becoming agriculturists were probably in the hunting stage. Still, nothing pleases them so much as to be out for hunting, they even now observe the "Dehiri hunting", which is an annual hunt. During the time of the annual hunt the Dehiri priest performs certain ceremonies to propitiate "Sin Bonga" to avert calamity during hunting. All these suggest that prior to becoming agriculturists the Santals were in the hunting stage. At present the Santals are typical agriculturists. There is no authentic record when the Santal first started tilling the soil. Rev. Bodding in his memoir, "How the Santals live" has mentioned their first attempt at cultivation in the following words :—

"It is just possible that one of their first attempts to get something out of the soil may have been something like what is now called 'kurau', a mode of cultivation that is said to have been used also by Santals in former years, but is not practised by them at the present time, so far as is known. It is, however, still kept up by the Paharias living on the hills of the Santal country. A piece of jungle is cut down high up

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CHAPTER III

The Santal Social Organization

Family: The family amongst the Santals should be of great interest considering that the Santals have been described as polyandrous. But besides the privileges of the younger brother over an elder brother's wife or the latitude allowed to the husband with the wife's younger sisters, there ought to have been traces of at least what has been called group-marriage. As the Santals could be taken as the representatives of a state of culture preceding the Dravidians in India and so be taken as a type of primitive patriliny, theoretically it should have shown the stages of family life which Morgan has described to be of pre-Aryan type. Linguistically, the Santals belong to what has been called the Austric group and thus would be the westernmost peripheral representatives of what is the Hawaiian type of family in the Pacific. In social structure also as well as in a sort of totemic organization the Santals recall several features of the Australian aboriginals. So an inquiry into the Santal family organization compared with the Hawaiian types or Australian systems or the polyandrous Nair or Tibetan types is necessary.

Types of Family: Amongst the Santal generally two types of family can be seen :

(1) The individual family consisting of father, mother, sons and daughters.

(2) The second consisting of grandfather, grandmother, sons, their wives, daughters (unmarried)

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614 302 184 to the use of vermilion and may be due to the important custom of smearing with vermilion on the occasion of marriage and other auspicious ceremonies which once divided the Santals into two groups based on the use and non-use of vermilion. That this was the uppermost idea in the Santal's mind was forcibly impressed on me while taking their measurements and enquiring of their sub-septs; the majority came out with either Sada (white) or Nij (proper). Thus the sub-sept division not being exogamic is not so much a vital part of their social organization; rather it was a division due to culturtal difference. The possibilities are that [174] once either the vermilion was a borrowed culture trait from outside or its use was given up by a section due to some internal reform movement or influence of some superior non-vermilion-using culture. It is more probable that the use of vermilion was more innate to them becuse the users are called the Nij or proper. [585] Vermilion, it may be noted, is used by them only on [171] the occasion of marriage. Among the Bengal Hindus vermilion is not only used in marriage but has to be always worn on the parted hair of the married women, lack of vermilion signifying widowhood. On the other hand in other parts of Hindu India more stress is laid on the use of flowers by the married women. Vermilion is not known in the primitive area of Assam. Thus it is probably a vital part of the culture of Chota Nagpur tribes.

Notes on Sub-septs

614 782 184 THA-OR SUB-SEPT

Whenever any ceremony (religious) occurs the members of this sub-sept sacrifice a goat or a pig in

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CHAPTER IV

RELIGION

Ceremonies and Festivals

The proper analysis of the religion of the Santals is as difficult as it is necessary for the history of succession of religious ideas in India and perhaps in the whole world. If there is any culture which still carries on the impress of the underlying philosophic speculation and order of thought that was widespread in India prior to the rise of the Dravidian culture, it was very likely the belief and social order of the Pre-Dravidian Santals.

In the study of the hypothetical development of religious ideas, the Santals figure prominently in the scheme of evolution. Thus Clodd cites them as an example of beliefs proceeding animism. He says :

'This is very interesting considering the sway of the ideas of impersonal universal spirit or mana so widely prevalent amongst the Austric-speaking people of which the Santals are a western peripheral branch. It is a subject for future enquiry, whether there had been any influence of Vedic or Upanishadic speculations of the universal supreme energy carried by these people in the migration eastward. There is a calling back of the shade of the departed common amongst those pre-Dravidian tribes of Chota-Nagpur which recalls the Vedic passages (Rigveda, Mandal 10)'.

The enquiries of Pater W. Schmidt, probably inspired by the subconscious Christian idea of an early revelation to primitive man of the idea of a supreme personal god, have led to the finding of many instances of the primitive high god in the first cultural strata of

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114 food-gatherers. The Santals fall in the category of the
77 primary or secondary cultural strata in the scheme of
• 174 Pater Schmidt. The idea of a supreme being or a
191 personal high god is well known amongst the primitive tribes of Central Provinces, Chota-Nagpur and Assam Thus according to Dalton, he is called Boro by the Kharias, Ote Boram or Sing Bonga by the Hos, Dula Deb or Pharsi Pen by the Gonds, Bura Penu or Bela Penu by the Khonds. In Assam, he is known as the Father by the Abors, as old bearded Rishi Salgong residing in heaven by the Garos, as the creator Pa-thian amongst the Kukis and the great god Arnam Kethe amongst the Mikirs. The enquiries of Sir James Frazer in his "Worship of Nature" have led him to cite most of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as devotees of the Sun god as the supreme being. Rai Bahadur S C. Roy thus has analysed the Dharmes or Biri Bela of the Oraons as Sun god. Similarly, according to him, the Ber Pitia or Ber Chichha of the Mulers is the Sun god and so also is the Bhagavan of the Korwas. The Bur a Penu of the Khonds is also the God of light.

114 Coming now to the Santals we find almost all the
77 authorities agreeing in conceding to them the idea of
176 a supreme being. But there is a great diversity of
174 opinion as to what he is called. According to Dalton, he is Sing Bonga amongst the Santals of Chota-Nagpur. Risley (Appendix VII, p. 446, People of India), on the authority of Skrefsurd, says that the supreme deity is called Thakur. E.G. Man, working in Orissa about fifty years ago, gives (Santhal and Santhalia, Chapter VI) the name of the supreme being of the Santals as Chando or Chando Bonga. Bompass (P. 402, Folklore of the Santal Parganas) in one of his folklores

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describes that Thakur Baba had made everything very convenient for mankind, etc. Rev. Bodding, who is the most recent and exhaustive worker on Santal beliefs and customs specially in the Mohulpaharia area in Santal Parganas, gives the name as Chando, 'the creator, the only one who gives and restores life' (Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore). Bodding further says that this name is often confounded with Cando the Sun. My own personal enquiries in the villages in Katikund within Dumka Damin and in the village on the base of the Zalway Hill, in Deoghar Sub-division, in the year 1932, elicited the information that the general name for God is Kando and the name for the Sun in that area is Sin Kando and for the moon Ninda Kando.

The Santal lives in harmony with the surroundings, having no temple and stooping to no idol made by his hand for the purpose of worship. It may be said that the Santal lives like a child of nature in rapport with all his surroundings, the hill, the dale, the spring or the grove being the objects of his reverential fear. They are the abodes of a supreme supernatural energy or the departmental spirits or the bongas. The bongas are friendly beings at times, but most often mischievous and naughty elves playing mischievous pranks with men, bringing them trouble and causing misery at times. These bongas are supposed at times to harass humanity, to eat people (as the Santals express it) because they are hungry, displeased, hurt or envious, and this eating is the devouring of health and substance of the person exposed to the displeasure of the spirits. The spirits may further be used by, or themselves use, the witches as medium.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Hindi word Nayak or leader, a term often used in the old Hindu army for lieutenants. Rai Bahadur Roy shows the Birhor Naya in a plate as Raja or chief[1]. Similarly, the word Pahan may be equated with the Hindi Pradhan or chief. These indicate the power of the religious functionary in the state. It cannot be said, at least from the study of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as well as those of Assam, that the medicine-man developed into the king, for in both the areas we find the temporal chief superior in authority to the ecclesiatic functionary. But the terms themselves show that the religious functionary is given a considerable recognition in temporal status. It is possible Hindu missionaries in bygone days might have exercised temporal and spiritual authority from which these tribes again recovered, re-establishing their own indigenous superiority of their secular chief or headman.

The term for the spirit-doctor with second sight is Mati among most of the primitive tribes of Chota-Nagpur. The Mundas, the Birhors and the Oraons all call their spirit-doctor Mati, the Hos of Seraikella call him Ojha[2]. The Santal term Ojha has rightly been objected to by Rev. P.O. Bodding as a Hindi loan word derived from Upadhyaya[3]. But we think he goes too far when he says that the whole system of Ojhaism is derived from the Hindus. Similar practices in Hindu society may be sometimes detected in the lowest stratum and also under even the mystic Tantric ritual. They

[1]S.C. Roy's The Birhor, p. 340, Plate XXVIII.
[2]A Chatterjee and T. Das, Hos. of Seraikella, part I p. 38.
[3]Rev. P.O. Bodding, Studies in Santal disease and Connected Folklore, part I.

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171 have been always branded in Hindu scriptures as practices of the lowest order, a sort of getting power over ghosts, pisaches and bhuts. The Gita[1] calls the worshippers of the prets and bhuts as tamasic. Thus they are to be looked upon as survival of a pre-Dravidian [174] stage of culture in Hindu Society. From the wide- [192] spread occurrence of the word Mati it would seem that the Santals have lost their own original term and adopted a Hindi loan word as they possibly did in the case of the word for the supreme being, Thakur. The tendency to change the name can be traced amongst the Oraons due to a recent semi-Hindu and semi-aboriginal religious revival movement known as the Bhagat, comparable to the similar Kharwar movement amongst the Santals. The Mati is called Bhagat as the most dignified term for a Baisnab devotee. A change of outlook has also taken place in making the spirits no longer malevolent and the aspect of mercy and grace under Baisnab influence have been emphasised, comparable to the changing of many of the pagan gods of Europe into Roman Catholic patron saints.

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171 Hunting being one of the most absorbing occupation of all these tribes a special functionary for hunting occasions is quite natural. Amongst the Santals the Dehri still maintains his own ; amongst the Birhors the Diguar or Kotowar has sunk to the position of an assistant to the priest Naya.

[539] यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः।
प्रेतान् भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः॥

[1]Chaptar 17, Verse No. 4.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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witches. But the majority comprises of herbs and sometimes also minerals, leading one to suspect strongly the influence of Hindu indigeneous Kaviraji treatment which had been universally adopted (ancient Hindu medicinal treatises having been translated into Arabic and passed through it into mediaeval European pharmacopoeia). Thus for instance the use of Rasa-Sindur is distinctly Hindu, the word Rasa being the old Hindu word for a form of preparation of mercury. Similarly, some names such as Kababchini or tobacco-water show post-Mahomedan adoption.

It may be mentioned here that there is a seasonal ceremonial called Ranjagao for the vitalising or blessing of medicinal plants in general, at the time of the autumnal Dasai parab. This has no reference to any special ingredients but increases the effectiveness of medicine in general. There are certain instructions given as to the time and mode.

The method of diagnosis, generally followed, is by feeling the pulse as amongst the Hindu Kavirajes.

(b) **Tejo Theory**

The Santal calls in the Rarantic for diseases due to natural causes. But he also has a theory of disease which in his scientific viewpoint is as natural a cause as infection caused by bacteria. But we can look upon it as an agency which is natural and yet supernatural and sometimes also diffused with human agency. According to them diseases would be caused by a tejo which may be large or very miscroscopic. These tejos are located in different parts of the body, some at the root of the nose and some in different parts of the body.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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by bongas are called in. There is no female Shaman as the female with supernatural power is always looked upon as wicked, malevolent and is persecuted as a witch. So it is to pit his higher knowledge against the wicked machinations of the witches that the *Jan guru* or *ojhas* are called who thus are important social functionaries curing individuals of their constant depression due to fear of sorcery and the evil eye or acting as village mental sanitation officials. Thus these Santal medicine-men, soothsayers and masters of incantations have to work hand in hand with the chiefs.

The name *ojha*, which the Santal uses, is not a Santal word; it is a Hindi word, used for diviner, enchanter, sorcerer, magician, etc. The word is derived from Sanskrit. The Santal has borrowed this word from the Hindi-speaking people. Rev. P.O. Bodding is of opinion that the Santal has adopted this exorcism from the Hindi-speaking people. His argument in favour of it is that the work of a Santal *ojha* in nature partly resembles that of the Hindu *ojha* and the special *bongas* invoked by the Santal *ojhas* all have names of Hindu origin in addition to their special *bongas*. But a tribe which believes so much in spirits (both malevolent and benevolent) must have some method of propitiation of those spirits as is usual among almost all the primitive tribes of the world.

The *ojha* is also a physician. The difference between the herbal doctors and the *ojha* lies in the fact that the former gives only medicine whilst the latter in addition to giving medicine tries to drive away the disease by magic incantations, etc., by the assistance of his special *bongas* whom he knows how to force to work.

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796 782 animals is eaten by the men. The only woman who gets a share is the wife of the priest. Drinking, dancing and singing are followed by young men and women of the village.

796 614 [184] **Jom Sim:** The *Jom Sim* is performed with many quaint ceremonies which differ somewhat for the different clans. That is why it is called clan festival. Mr. Culshaw recorded some stories from which it can be ascertained how it is connected with clan. "The 614 796 539 Karwak Hasdak tell the story of how long ago their ancestors were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and all the Hasdak were present. They had performed the sacrifices and everyone had been served with rice and meat, but some of the younger folk present felt that they had not been given enough to eat, so they killed a buffalo, or kada, became known as Karwar Hasdak". The Soren Santal relate "that in the very early days the ancestors of the Soren were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and some of the company began to prepare [177] the food and cook it. In imitation of Brahmin cooks they put on sacred threads and served all the people. From that time they became known as poita Soren".[1]

796 614 •174 It is probably the oldest sacrifice the Santal have because it has more aboriginal features in it than any other sacrifice of theirs.

224 793 [221] [824] [211] **Dihri Hunting:** The *Dihri* hunting, which is the most important hunting of the Santals which takes place once a year in the month of Falgun (February and March). *Dihri*, their hunting priest carries a big branch of a *Sal* tree with leaves and goes to the market, where people

[1] W.J. Culshaw—Tribal heritage. 1949. pp. 74 and 78.

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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CHAPER IV

Santal Laws and Government

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It is too early yet to disentangle the various cultural elements which have set their stamp on the village organisation of different parts of India. Socio-economists and students of primitive law are greatly indebted to Prof. Radhakamal Mukherjee for trying to pierce through the veil that surrounds the beginnings of Indian primitive political and judicial institutions by a culture-strata analysis. In his illuminating paper[1] he first of all describes the system in which perhaps most primitive elements have survived such as the Khond type, mainly characterised by tribal system in a village. The second, the more advanced type, is to be found according to him among the Mundas and the Oraons of Chota Nagpur characterised by tribal government and an agrarian distribution under centralised control. A still more advanced type would be that found among village communities of Malabar with democratic tribal traditions overlaid by feudal and monarchical tribal tendencies and found in all complexities amongst the most interesting matriarchal Nayars, though there are many patrirachal tribes in Cochin, Travancore and Coorg. Lastly came the fourth type, the Indo-Aryan. The Munda-Dravidian village constitution is contrasted with the Indo-Aryan system. Later on he has found out another type which he calls Mongoloid (which might be termed the Assam type) and he has further differentiated the Indo-Aryan type from

[1] R.K. Mukerjee, Village Communities in India, Man in India, Vol. III, 1923.pp.1-27.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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121 N.W. India into the Afghan and Beluchi sub-types.
•174 Thus we have the regional economic types of (1) Assam,
171 (2) Chota Nagpur, (3) Malabar, and Madras (4) and N.W. India, which possibly spread over the rest of India along with Aryan conquest and colonisation. It is quite likely that there would be many sub-types in each. In the Festschrift presented to Pater Schmidt, we have a division of the cultural strata of India into the Ur-folk of Palaeolithic time, the Dravidians with Neolithic shoulder-celt culture and the Aryans with copper or iron, succeeding each other chronologically. Giuffrida-Ruggeri's ethnic stratification of India gives us the Negritos, the Australoid Vedda, Dravidians and different Indo-Aryan races succeeding each other chronologically. Prof. Von Eickstedt's classification gives us interesting zonal ethnic types such as (1) the Veddoid, or Palaeo-Indian, the most primitive group with two varieties namely Malidae from Northern jungles and Gondidae from Central Province and Chota Nagpur, and (2) the non-Negroid Melanid group with the sub-type of Kolidae followed by two advanced groups of Indidae and Brachydae.

Thus a cultural analysis of a Santal village administration would pave the way for a clear understanding of the economic and political stratification and their history and evolution in ancient India and what was the real contribution of the Assam, Chota Nagpur or Malabar and Madras or N.W. Indian type to it. The Santal type follows closely what has been described as Mnuda-Oraon constitution; as the Santals are linguistically and culturally, if not physically closely akin to the Mundas, Hos, etc., though the Oraons are linguistically quite different.

4: Biswas D, F-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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movement which had some tinge of Hinduism. This movement was started in 1871. The leader of this movement was known as Bhagrit of Taldiha and a title of '*babaji*' was added to his name. The word '*babaji*' is a Hindu word and so it seems that it was taken from the Hindus. Later on he was arrested and imprisoned and for the time being this movement was suppressed. Again in 1880 it was revived by one Dubia Gosain who came from the vicinity of Deoghar. His activities were more pro-Hindu. Several Hindu practices were introduced by this movement and one distinguishing feature was the worship of the '*babaji*' in the manner of reverence paid to the Sanyasis by the Hindus. The religious side of the movement had a colouring of Hinduism. The '*babaji*' smeared his body with ashes, took ganja and kept long hair and worshipped Mahadeo (Siva).

It is probable that due to this Kharwar movement the Santals have introduced some Hindu deities—Kalimata, Lakhmi mai, (goddess of wealth) Parvati, Mahadeo etc. in their pantheon of *Bongas*. The Santals have belief in Rama and Krishna, the Hindu Avtars.

The word Thakur is sometimes used by them in place of their High God Cando. The word Thakur is of Sanskrit origin and the Hindus use this name for gods in general.

Some of the festivals of the Santals have Hindu counter parts. The Pata Parab of the Santals is the imitation of the Hindu festival "Charak Puja". In this puja the Hindus worship Siva (Mahadeo). The Santal Sankrat festival is equivalent to the Hindu Pous

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179 Pabban. The Santals observe this festival on the last
796 day of the month of Pous, just like the Hindus do.

Besides this, the Santals take part in the Durga Puja festival of the Hindus. They wear new clothes and attend the Puja with wives and children and enjoy the fun for five days like the Hindus.

756 There exists a great controversy about the institu-
177 tion of Ojhaism among the Santals. There are possi-
• 174 bilities of its having been borrowed from the Hindus by the Santals since the practice of this form of magico-religious ritual has much in common between the two groups, namely the Santals and the Hindus. Rev.
[114] Bodding also points out the probability of the borrowing of the principles for *Ojhaism* and much of its ritual from the Hindus though he does not thereby exclude completely the converse. In part substantiation of the above contention, which however is opposed by some authors on the subject, may be cited the striking similarity between the names and functions of the Santal and Hindu *Ojhas*, pointing to perhaps a strong interconnection between the two groups in respect of *Ojhaism*. The very name *Ojha* is Hindi and is adopted by the Santals from Hindi speaking people. Further it is interesting to note that *Ojha* is a caste name among the Hindu Brahmins, and in the early days the occupation of this caste group was mainly soothsaying, foretelling and astrology and curing snake bites etc. The concentration of such groups is in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It may therefore be considered very probable that the Santals have borrowed from the Hindus the essentials of *Ojhaism*, though certain indigenous

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elements have doubtless modified its practice among the Santals

Christian influence. In 1862 the Church missionary society started work in the Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal subdivisions and they built a colony for their converts in the Western Duars (in Godda). The Scandinavian Mission started their missionary activities in the Dumka subdivision in 1867. In 1884 the American Methodist Episcopal Mission started work in the Pakur subdivision. Other missions were the Christian Women's Board of Missions, a Wesleyen mission, which started work at Deoghar subdivision.

Thus it can be seen that after the Santal rebellion several Christian missions started their activities in and outside the Santal Parganas. It is stated in the Seventy fifth annual report of the Santal mission of Northern Churches (1941) that 25,000 Santals were converted. The record of missionaries has been a very creditable one in some respects, particularly in regard to education, sanitation, medical care and general raising of the standard of living, but in context of religion the missionary zeal has been somewhat misdirected. These converts are cut off from any activity that savours of worship of tribal *Bongas*. They do not contribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with village festivals. They do not take part in the worship of the five deities of the Jaherathan.

The converted Santals and even some non-Santals refer to Adam and Eve as *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Burhi* who according to the tradition of the tribal Santals are the parents of mankind and the human race

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Bengali. The female members mostly cannot speak any language except their own. They learn Hindi when they come in contact with the Hindi speaking labourers in the coal mines, railway workshops or when they come in contact with the Hindu Mahajans (money lenders) and traders. Some of the Hindi and Bengali words have also been introduced in their vocabulary which can be noticed in the language of their *mantras* and *prayers*.

Vermilion is one of the most important item for marriage and in the worship of deities both for the Hindus and the Santals. Some think that the Santals have copied it from the Hindus, but it is doubtful whether it is their borrowed thing at all. Because in such important social customs as marriage and worship of tribal deities, vermilion is considered by the Santals as an essential ingredient. There is a kind of marriage in which a Santal can marry a woman simply by applying vermilion on her forehead, which shows that vermilion is the only binding source of marriage here. Such an important ingredient of culture is not usually borrowed and we can take it as a case of culture similarity. Similarly, another custom of *Garde Jawae* is prevalent both among the Santals and the Hindus. There are other similarities in their social, religious and economic structure with the Hindus, but all of them cannot be attributed to their borrowing from the Hindus. Infact, saying so, implies that the Santals had no culture of of their own, which can not be true. It seems that there has been a two-way traffic of culture exchange-Hindus having borrowed some elements from the Santals and vice versa.

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CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A PEOPLE

THE Santals are one of the largest of the tribal peoples of India; at the census of 1931 they numbered over two and a half million. Their villages are widely distributed over the area which lies between eighty-six and eighty-eight meridians east longitude and between twenty-two and twenty-six degrees north latitude. They are also found farther to the north-east, where some have settled in North Bengal and Western Assam. They are the most easterly of the great belt of primitive folk which stretches across Central India.

Where the Chota Nagpur plateau begins to give way to the Ganges plain the country is broken up into a series of ridges. Through the narrow valleys thus formed flow many streams which maintain a brief and furious life during the rains. There are few big rivers, and even these dry to nothingness in the hot season. In some parts there are ranges of low hills; in others conical-shaped hills rise abruptly from the undulating plain. The countryside is still for the most part well wooded, and the *sal* forests (*Shorea robusta*, Gartn.) contribute to the wellbeing of those who dwell in them. It is, however, a hard country in which to live, where the soil is rocky and the water supplies are scant.

Dr. B. S. Guha[1] has distinguished six main types among the races who inhabit India. The Santals belong to his second "main race", the Proto-Australoid, which he considers arrived in India soon after the Negritos. The name is given because of the similarity of racial type with Australian tribes. "We have no precise information as to when this race first came into India. It is found among the prehistoric skulls in the Tinnevelly district, and from references in early Sanskrit literature to 'Nishads', where they are described as noseless (*anash*) with dark skin colour and peculiar speech and habits, there can be no doubt that the Proto-Australoid tribes were meant."[2] The Santals are short in stature, and among them the broad flat nose with a sunken nose ridge is fairly common. They frequently have wavy hair; sometimes it is curly, though it is never frizzy. They share all these characteristics with other primitive tribes in the same group. Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state

[1] B. S. Guha, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "Racial Elements in the Population", 1944.
[2] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state those features which present-day Indian culture owes to the Proto-Australoid: "To the Proto-Australoid races may perhaps be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food taboos, and magical belief still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and intermarriage which forms the basis of the caste system must also owe its origin to them."[1] It is impossible to dogmatize on these subjects when one remembers how widespread each of the above factors is among primitive cultures in various parts of the world. The tribal structure of the Santals is totemistic and the clans are patrilinear, as among the other tribes of Central India. Many of the taboos and customs which have grown up round life's crises, many features in the tribal ritual, their attitude towards disease and towards the supranatural world, are fundamentally similar not only throughout these tribes but throughout the lower range of the Hindu social structure. The perusal of such a book as William Crooke's *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*[2] gives convincing evidence of the large stock of ideas that are held in common.

By the test of language the Santals reveal a high degree of social cohesion. Dr. J. H. Hutton's judgment cannot be gainsaid: "The extent of the survival of tribal languages is a better index than that of the survival of tribal religion to the social cohesion of the tribe, since the test of language is easier and more definite than that of religion, where the borderland of Hinduism is often vague and obscure."[3] The Santals have been more tenacious of their language than many of the other peoples to whom they are racially allied. They are the largest tribe in India to retain an aboriginal language to the present day. This belongs to what is known as the Austric or Austro-Asiatic family. It is closely related to Mundari as well as to Ho, Korku, Savara and Gadaba, languages spoken by smaller tribes. The relationship of the Santals with these tribes is racial and cultural as well as linguistic, and as they live in neighbouring territories it is very likely that they have a common origin. They have nevertheless been separate long enough to develop their individual languages and to possess distinct though allied cultures. Other representatives of the Austro-Asiatic languages are found farther afield, the Mon-Khmer branch being found in Indo-China, while Khasi, spoken in Assam, is another. The fact that Khasis are Mongoloid and that their society is matri-

[1] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 28. [2] Oxford University Press, 1926.
[3] *Census Report of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Ch. x, p. 348.

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When I saw the jet-black people, with a necklace of white beads about their necks, and their peculiar dress, if dress it might be called, I was more confirmed in my opinion. I immediately alighted from my horse and inquired if that was a village of the Coles, but was not a little surprised at being so soon transported from the Oriyas to a people who could not understand a word I said. I looked about with astonishment at the romantic change, till at length I found an old man who could speak broken Oriya, of whom I gained the following information. He said they were not Coles, but Santals."[1] The author of the *Annals* relied largely on information supplied to him by the Rev. Jeremiah Phillips, who was a pioneer in the study of the language. The following occurs in the Annual Report of the mission for the year 1846: "During the past year Brother Phillips has acquired some knowledge of the language of this people (the Santals), by which he has been able to commence efforts for their improvement, which it is believed will result in great good to this hitherto neglected portion of the inhabitants of Orissa. He has performed a journey of some two or three weeks among them, which was very serviceable and interesting to him. He has published a tract of 8 pages, which is the first work ever published in the Santal dialect."

The Santals have been living in South-West Bengal for at least three hundred years. It is probable that they have been there for about five hundred years. There is agreement among the authorities that they moved to their present sites from the more hilly districts of Chota Nagpur farther west. It has been computed that the village of Rangibari in Bankura district is over three hundred years old.[2] Such a long period of residence on the one site is exceptional; the great majority of the Santal villages of today cannot look back on so long a history. Wherever a tradition regarding the founders of a village has survived, one finds that the first settlers moved to their present abode from no great distance away. Regarding Barikul, we are told: "The one who tied the brown hen here was Haru Mañjhi, whose family came first from Aurasuri in Bogri—a distance of about thirty-five miles. They say that formerly there were many wild elephants in Bogri, and for fear of the elephants many of the inhabitants fled to other parts. Sorup and Haru

[1] This and the following quotation I owe to the kindness of the Rev. A. A. Berg, who enabled me to see early reports in his possession.

[2] M. C. McAlpin, *A Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Districts of Birghum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore*, IV (20), Bengal Government, 1909.

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Sorup and Haru Mañjhi were two brothers. Sorup Mañjhi left Bogri because of the elephants, came to Raipur and settled. He had established himself well at the end of a year or two, so he told his younger brother: 'Leave Bogri, where the elephants are on the increase. Some day you will be trampled on and killed. Come with me.' Haru Mañjhi thought to himself: 'True enough, many men have been killed; perchance they will kill me.' Thinking thus, he took all his children, left Bogri and came to Raipur. From Rautora in Raipur they established a village in Barikul, Sorup Mañjhi saying to his brother: 'Go to, brother, put up your huts and stay at Barikul.' Then Haru Mañjhi went out with his children, his cattle and his goats, and built his huts there. He had four boys and two girls; the girls they brought with them from Bogri, and the four boys were born in Barikul. He obtained sons-in-law for his daughters to live with them, and one or two tenants came together. In this way the village increased to many houses." Wild elephants, of which there are not so many now as formerly, do still on occasion cause great damage to ripening crops. Barikul was founded five generations ago, a period of about one hundred years. At that time there was also a possibility that by moving his abode the Santal could regain a measure of independence. The Santals have been spoken of as formerly "nomadic".[1] It may be that in the strict sense of the word they were in some remote period nomads. For any period of which we have record, however, they have been agriculturalists, though food-gathering and hunting provide them with important subsidiary occupations. Their migrations have been due to pressure of one kind and another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals, malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

The last cause operated to produce a great northward movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and finally goaded them into rebellion. The Santal rebellion has been frequently described.[2] It took place in an area remote from the Bankura district, but it has to be mentioned because it created

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1910.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941. Chapter on the Primitive Tribes, pp. 417-44. Also bibliography.

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up for non-payment of the accumulated debt, which by then was a considerably larger sum. They were thus compelled to make new agreements with their landlord at an enhanced rent and with inferior rights. The later passage of legislation has done little to lift the burden of despair about the future which is an unhappy characteristic of Santal life today. Such incidents explain in no small measure the cry of the heart which is heard from time to time: "Give us back our land." It is some consolation that the Act of 1918, followed by legislation during the last twenty years aimed at improving the status of the peasantry in Bengal, has brought to a close some of the worst chapters in a long and sordid story.

The community life of the Santal centres in his village, and is so organized as to make common action inevitable in social, economic and religious affairs. The houses are built on either side of the village street, which must be left wide enough for two bullock carts to pass each other. This street extends from east to west, the eastern end being known as the upper end. The houses, set close together, have their main door opening on to the village street, and each household is responsible for the state of the road outside its own residence. It is here in the village that the Santal learns how to live; here he is initiated into the traditional loyalties of the tribe, and the village of his birth exercises a deep influence over him all his days.

The village headman, or *manjhi*, is the man of greatest consequence in the community. The post is hereditary, and it passes ordinarily to the eldest son of the former headman. When the direct line of succession fails through lack of sons or from incapacity on the part of the natural heir, the office passes on to a brother or near relative on the paternal side. The history of the village is preserved in the tradition handed down concerning the headman's ancestry. For example, at Sarenga they tell a story of the three brothers who were the founders of the village and divided the village offices between them. Among them Lokhon has acquired the greatest measure of renown, and he is commemorated by a shrine outside the present village. The story is told that he died suddenly, and before the news of his death had spread through the village his spirit took possession of a young man sitting in the courtyard of a house some distance away, and through him Lokhon told the villagers that they were to make a special shrine for him. There is a ceremony at the beginning of each new year which suggests that at one time the appointment of the head-

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622 [796] [174] man, together with that of all the other officials, was renewed annually, but there is little reality in it at the present day and the post is held for life. He is the spokesman of the villagers in all matters affecting their temporal welfare. In the original 622 174 423 427 settlements it was usual for two or three brothers to start the new village together. The eldest brother assumed the leading position, and all the lands cleared or claimed for the future were in his gift. The cultivable land was divided equally after some portions had been reserved for the officials in recognition of the services they would be called on to perform for the benefit of the community, and the headman received the biggest share of the reserved land. As the village grew, others came to settle. Some became the tenants of the headman, fleeing from the oppression of landlords elsewhere. Others came into the village by marrying daughters of the first settlers. So it comes about that the family of the headman is the most substantial in the village. During the course of years, however, even the headman has in the majority of cases lost his original rights to a non-Santal landlord and has himself become an under-tenant, in spite of which his family has maintained its favourable position in relation to the rest of the villagers. In some cases he has also been able to acquire the rights of other tenants who have defaulted for one reason or another in paying rent.

622 [434] [689] [724] [585] In addition to land, the headman receives other payments which he can use for his own benefit. Thus, when an offender against tribal custom is fined the headman receives a fourth of the total amount. During the spring hunts he receives a part of the flesh of every animal slain by a man from his own village. During the marriage ceremonies he occupies an important position throughout, and when a new bride is coming to his village her father has to pay a rupee to him before the party sets out from her home. At all times he is treated with [554] great respect, especially by the younger members of the community. A marriage party always pays its respects first at his house, and at festivals, when the young men go dancing through the village street, they start outside the headman's house.

In all matters involving the members of more than one village he is the acknowledged representative of his own people, whether it be the making of arrangements for a marriage or the [627] fixing of dates for festivals and for hunts. In the settling of disputes he acquires considerable experience, being the chairman of [623] the council in his own village and meeting with the headmen of [554] other villages when the hunt council sits. Enjoying a position

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They have no memory of ever having possessed the institution, but a snatch of song once heard suggests that they did at some period abandon it. In a *Sohrae* song occur the words

> The young girls are sleeping in the girls' house,
> The young men are sleeping in the young men's cowshed.[1]

If, as seems likely, they once had such an institution, it is probable that the *jogmaṇjhi* and his wife were in charge. At some festivals the young men sleep at the house of the *jog maṇjhi*, and at the time of the *Sohrae* they go to him at the beginning of the festival and ask him in formal language to turn a blind eye to any of the faults they commit during that time. He is also called in to investigate allegations of immoral behaviour. The appointment is for life and it is hereditary, like that of the headman. In every village there are also two priests, who are responsible for maintaining right relations with the unseen world, but it will be more convenient to deal with their functions at a later stage.[2]

The humblest of the village officials is the *goḍet'*, the bailiff and messenger of the headman. When a child is born or a villager dies, it is the *goḍet'* who carries the news to all the houses. If it becomes necessary to summon the men of the village to a council to announce the near approach of a marriage party, or to collect dues from the houses for a feast in connection with a festival, it is the *goḍet's* duty to see that it is done. He is the errand boy, and consequently something of a butt for the wit of the village, as the following song (sung during the *Sohrae* festival) bears witness:

> Here comes the headman walking slowly,
> And here comes his deputy with wooden sandals,
> And also the *goḍet'* calling out to everyone.
>
> Put out a woven bed for the headman to sit on,
> Put out a wooden stool for his deputy,
> And put out for the *goḍet'* a broken bed.
>
> Pour out for the headman the first brew of beer,
> Pour out for his deputy the second brew,
> Pour out for the *goḍet'* the leavings.
>
> Give to the headman cakes of sifted flour,
> Give to his deputy some coarser cakes,
> And give to the *goḍet'* the lumpy bits.[3]

[1] See Appendix B, No. 1.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 2.
[3] See Chapter 7

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separate representation. In the elections to the Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly which took place in 1946 a Santal offered himself for election for the first time from the Bankura Rural Scheduled caste constituency. He was a member of one of the rare well-to-do Santal families and had received education up to the Intermediate Arts standard of the Calcutta University at the mission college in Bankura. He stood as an "Independent" and he was supported by the Moslem League organization, but he failed to be elected. His rival was a non-Santal member of the Scheduled castes who was a Congress candidate. No Santal has yet been elected to the Bengal Provincial Assembly.

The fact that the dominant Santal attitude to their neighbours is one of suspicion and latent hostility does not mean that this has always been the case. There are some indications pointing to a time when relations between Santals and Hindus were more friendly than they are today. The story already related about the Mahato is one. It may well have been that during the period of Moslem suzerainty the aboriginals made common cause with the Hindus. To go back much farther, P. O. Bodding[1] has suggested that in the story of the *Ramayana*, one of the great Hindu epics, there is a hint of an alliance between aboriginals and the hero of the epic, Ram, when he made war against the King of Lanka. The reference is to the assistance given by the "Hanuman log", or monkeys, who, it has been inferred, may well have been in fact human beings of the stock from which the ancestors of the present-day Santals were drawn. In Santal folklore there are stories which describe the marriage of human beings with monkeys, and there is little doubt that such stories symbolize the results of interracial marriages.

Living as they do in close contact with their neighbours, the Santals have borrowed heavily from the ideas and institutions around them, and in some cases they have doubtless contributed to the common stock. It is almost impossible to isolate certain features in their culture and say that these have been borrowed from non-Santal sources. That which is distinctive in Santal culture is the way in which they have used a common background to conserve their tribal life and to provide themselves with the rudiments of a philosophy. The retention of their language as a vigorous element of their own culture must have preserved much from the ancient days of their own life, and has to some extent cut them off from familiarity with the epics

[1] *District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas.*

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and legends of Hinduism. The linguistic evidence shows how their material culture has been vitally affected and has some bearing on the more elusive realm of thought and belief. The grammatical structure of Santali has little in common with that of the Indo-Aryan tongues. It is an agglutinative and not an inflectional language. There have, however, been large and extensive borrowings of words. An instructive example can be taken from their method of husking rice. The term *ḍhinki*, used for a foot-pedal rice husker, has been borrowed from Bengali, and a *ḍhinki* is found in almost every home. The rice that is husked at the time of making sacrifices must be prepared in the home of the village priest, and in its preparation the use of the older and more primitive *ukhuṛ* is obligatory. This is a wooden mortar in which the rice is husked by hand with a wooden pestle, or *tok*. Both these words are Austro-Asiatic in origin. It is likely that when the household adopted the new method of husking rice the tribe did not change over from the old method of husking the sacred rice for fear of a loss in efficacy. One reason given is that as the *ḍhinki* is operated by the foot, rice husked in the *ḍhinki* is unclean and so unfit for offering to the spirits. It may be that the association of a mortar and pestle with sexual symbolism enhanced its magical value. The symbolism in this case is familiar to the Santal mind, for one way of expressing differences of sex is to refer to boys as "pestles" and to girls as "mortars". The *ukhuṛ* has to be used by the medicine man in preparing remedies; it is also used at marriages, when the feet of the bridegroom's party are washed over an *ukhuṛ*, and an *ukhuṛ* filled with water is required during the death ceremonies. In Bengal the rice which forms the daily food of the people is boiled before husking, and the Santals follow the same method in preparing it; but the rice used in sacrifices, *aḍwa caole*, is never so treated, being dried in the sun.

Among their domestic animals, the fowl, the dog and the goat have non-Bengali names, while the names for pigeons, sheep, pigs and, most important of all, their cattle are borrowed. Fowls, goats and pigs are all used in their sacrifices. In the realm of wild life the Santal has found little need to borrow a vocabulary from his neighbours. Wild animals, birds, trees and shrubs, many fish and insects, also snakes, have Santali names. The same is true of most of the weapons used in hunting. Although the term for paddy is Santal, the names of all the implements now used in rice cultivation and the terms for the